

ITEM 9-C

CITY OF ALAMEDA

Memorandum

To: Honorable President and
Members of the Planning Board

From: Andrew Thomas
Planning Services Manager

Date: April 25, 2011

Re: Review and Comment on Staff's Preliminary Responses to the Regional
Sustainable Communities Strategy – Initial Vision Scenario

BACKGROUND

In January, staff provided an overview of Senate Bill 375, the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and the effect of the law on the City of Alameda and the Bay Area as a region. That report described the multi-year process that the region is embarking on to create a Regional Plan to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as mandated by SB 375. The report also explained that the first step in the process would be the release of a first draft plan ("Initial Vision Scenario") for public review and discussion. In March, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) released the Initial Vision Scenario for public discussion. The draft document is included as Attachment A to this report and is available at http://www.onebayarea.org/plan_bay_area/.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Planning Board and the Alameda community with an opportunity to comment on the Initial Vision Scenario. Planning and Public Works staff is reviewing the Initial Vision Scenario and will draft a response to ABAG and MTC for City Council review in May. Staff's preliminary responses are included in this report for public review and comment.

DISCUSSION

The Initial Vision Scenario is the first step in a two-year effort between local jurisdictions and the regional agencies to create the SCS. According to MTC and ABAG, the primary goal of the SCS and the Initial Vision Scenario is to build a future Bay Area that will thrive and prosper under the changing circumstances of the twenty-first century. By directly confronting the challenges associated with population growth, climate change, new economic conditions, and an increasing public-health imperative, the SCS will attempt to ensure a Bay Area, which is both livable and economically competitive. According to MTC and ABAG, a successful SCS will:

- Recognize and support compact walkable places where residents and workers have access to services and amenities to meet their day-to-day needs;

- Reduce long commutes and decrease reliance that increases energy independence and decreases the region's carbon consumption;
- Support complete communities that remain livable and affordable for all segments of the population, maintaining the Bay Area as an attractive place to reside, start or continue a business, and create jobs.
- Support a sustainable transportation system that maximizes the use of the existing infrastructure, reduces the region's reliance on automobiles, and promotes transit expansions;
- Provide increased accessibility and affordability to our most vulnerable populations;
- Conserve water and decrease our dependence on imported food stocks and their high transport costs;
- Provide adequate capacity for goods movement;
- Adapt to sea level rise and other issues; and
- Preserve natural and agricultural lands (i.e. "green fields").

The Initial Vision Scenario released for public discussion by ABAG and MTC in March is not intended to be a forecast or recommendation for the future of the region. It does not take into account the many factors that constrain housing production regionally and locally, such as infrastructure capacity, affordable housing subsidies, and market and tax structure factors. The principle purpose of the Initial Vision Scenario is to articulate how the region could potentially meet a 15% GHG reduction mandate by 2035 and grow in a sustainable manner. It projects a growth of more than 2 million people over 25 years. The Initial Vision Scenario is designed to begin the discussion of how federal, state, regional and local policies, programs, and funding priorities would need to change or be adjusted to achieve a sustainable future.

The Initial Vision Scenario is "financially unconstrained," which means that it assumes no limitation on funding to construct and maintain the decaying and undersized infrastructure (e.g., streets, transit, wastewater, etc) in the older, inner Bay Area cities, such as Alameda. For example, the Initial Vision Scenario assumes significant increases in transit frequency and transit capacity to support growth in the inner Bay Area and reduce automobile trips and GHG.

To reduce GHG emissions, the Initial Vision Scenario focuses 97% of future growth in inner Bay Area communities near existing transit and transportation infrastructure. Only 3% of the new growth is assumed to be new "greenfield" development. It is assumed that Alameda, Santa Clara, and Contra Costa Counties receive the majority of future housing and jobs. Thirty two percent of the future housing growth is focused in the Cities of San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland.

Unfortunately, ABAG and MTC's evaluation of the Initial Vision Scenario found that even if growth were focused in the interior communities as projected in the Initial Vision Scenario, the region is not expected to meet the State mandate as potential decrease in GHG emissions is estimated at 12% by 2035. In the next steps of the process, MTC and ABAG will begin looking at detailed scenarios, which might reduce GHG emissions to the targeted 15%.

All of the cities in Alameda County (with the exception of Piedmont) are allocated a large increase in households. In Alameda, the Initial Vision Scenario proposes 8,099 new households over the next 25 years (a 25.5 % increase in existing households) and 12,069 jobs (a 47.6 % increase in existing jobs). The large increase in jobs allows for an improved Citywide jobs/housing balance in 2035 as compared to 2010. (See Initial Vision Scenario page 36). Within Alameda County, Piedmont has the smallest increase in households (0.3%), while the City of Alameda has the second smallest increase in households (25.5%). All the other cities in Alameda County are increased between 26.8% (Union City) and 129% (Emeryville).

Most of the Alameda housing growth (4,090 households) is projected for the former Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS Alameda) (i.e., Alameda Point, Alameda Landing, Coast Guard Housing), 981 households are allotted to the Northern Waterfront Area, and the remaining 3,028 households are proposed as in-fill development elsewhere around the City (see Initial Vision Scenario, page 48).

For comparison purposes, Oakland is estimated to grow by 65,453 housing units and 67,518 jobs; and Berkeley by 15,730 housing units and 8,794 jobs. San Francisco is allocated an additional 90,114 households.

Next Steps

ABAG and MTC have invited local jurisdictions to comment on the Initial Vision Scenario and submit those comments in May of this year. Staff's initial comments are outlined below for community review and discussion. After receipt of the comments from local jurisdictions, ABAG and MTC staff will begin work on a series of "detailed scenarios."

The Detailed Scenarios will be different than the Initial Vision Scenarios in that they will take into account constraints that might limit development potential, and will identify the infrastructure and resources that will likely need to be secured to support a Detailed Scenario. MTC and ABAG expect to release a first round of Detailed Scenarios by late 2011. Local jurisdictions will provide input, which will then be analyzed for the release of the Preferred Scenario by the end of 2011.

Initial Alameda Staff Comments on Initial Vision Scenario

As discussed above, MTC and ABAG have invited local jurisdictions to comment on the Initial Vision Scenario. Staff has begun an evaluation of the Initial Vision Scenario and have the following proposed comments for community, Planning Board and City Council consideration:

1. Support for the Regional Approach to Greenhouse Gas Emissions. *The community of Alameda is committed to addressing climate change and supports the objectives of AB 32 and SB 375 to reduce GHG emissions. Confirming that commitment, in 2008, the City adopted a Local Climate Action Plan with the goal of reducing greenhouse gases locally by 25% from 2005 levels by 2020. As a community that is uniquely vulnerable to sea level rise and the other effects of climate change, Alameda will support the region in its efforts to meet the 15% reduction target.*
2. Housing Opportunities in Alameda. *The City can provide significant housing opportunities at the former Naval Air Station (identified in the Initial Vision Scenario as the “Naval Air Station PDA”) and the former industrial areas along the northern waterfront (identified as the “Northern Waterfront Growth Opportunity Areas” in the Initial Vision Scenario). However, the Initial Vision Scenario also includes an unrealistic and impractical assumption that an additional 3,000 new units could be provided elsewhere in the established residential neighborhoods in Alameda. Within the established residential districts, the City has one acre of vacant residential land and 14 acres of land that is occupied by existing office or commercial uses that could be redeveloped with residential use. (Source: City of Alameda Housing Element). Historically, the City has also added about 10 new units per year within and adjacent to existing residential structures in existing residential areas. The assumption that up to 3,000 households might be added within these areas and on the three available sites within the next 25 years is unrealistic. The SCS should be a realistic plan to address the threats of global warming. To assume unrealistic growth in the SCS would be irresponsible.*
3. Regional Support: *Ultimately, the total number of units that might be accommodated at NAS Alameda and along the Northern Waterfront will depend largely on actions by the region and the State. To achieve the regional GHG reduction goals, the region must acknowledge and address the factors that currently limit growth in the inner bay area cities like Alameda. Many of the following suggestions are reflected in the “Potential Strategies” in Section 4.2 of the Initial Vision Scenario, but Alameda must emphasize that without the following support, the growth projected in Alameda will not occur due to financial, regulatory, and legal barriers outside of the City’s control.*
 - a. Funding for Off-site Transportation Improvements. *All vehicle (automobile and bus) transportation between NAS Alameda, the Northern Waterfront and the larger region is limited by the Webster/Posey Tubes (2 lanes in each*

direction and a substandard 2½ foot wide joint pedestrian/bicycle path), Park Street Bridge (2 travel lanes and a nonstandard pedestrian/bicycle facility in each direction), the Fruitvale Bridge (two lanes in each direction and a nonstandard pedestrian/bicycle facility in each direction), and the High Street Bridge (one travel lane and a nonstandard pedestrian/bicycle facility in each direction). With the exception of the Fruitvale Bridge, all of these crossings are nearing capacity in the morning outgoing direction and inbound evening direction. The only way to accommodate significant new growth (the 25% assumed in the Initial Vision Strategy) in Alameda is through significant improvements to the City's, Oakland's and the region's transportation systems. If the State and the regional agencies do not allocate the funds necessary to expand and maintain the infrastructure to allow buses, bicycles, pedestrians, and automobiles to access the larger region, it is unrealistic to assume that Alameda will be able to accommodate anything close to a 25% increase in households.

- b. Funding for On-site Infrastructure Improvements. The Initial Vision Scenario assumes it is cheaper to build in the inner cities, already serviced by infrastructure, than to extend infrastructure to greenfield sites. However, both NAS Alameda and the Northern Waterfront will require significant upgrades to the wastewater, stormwater, domestic water, and dry utility systems. For example, Alameda Point which comprises approximately two-thirds of NAS Alameda, and is the single greatest opportunity to accommodate new housing in Alameda, could require as much as \$1 billion to replace the Navy's 70-year-old infrastructure to meet State, regional, and local codes and address issues such as sea-level rise and water quality issues. With the recent proposal to eliminate redevelopment in California, if the State or the region does not provide assistance to the private sector to fund these improvements, it is unlikely that the private sector will be able to finance significant new growth on these former industrial sites. The City supports all the potential strategies described on pages 82 and 83 of the Initial Vision Scenario.
- c. Funding for Affordable Housing and Brownfield Remediation. Redevelopment of the former NAS Alameda and the Northern Waterfront requires substantial public subsidies for affordable housing and hazardous materials remediation. Typically, the City would look to its redevelopment agency to financially assist the redevelopment of these areas. Without this funding source, the City will have little to no ability to facilitate redevelopment of these properties or to support affordable housing as part of new housing projects.
- d. Regional Cooperation on Transportation, Wastewater, and Air Quality. Although currently being resolved, the US Environmental Protection Agency and a non-profit organization had threatened to sue the East Bay Municipal Utility District and its satellite jurisdictions, of which the City is one, over Clean Water Act violations due to a revised interpretation of the Act. In addition, in

2003, the City of Oakland sued Alameda over Alameda's General Plan Amendment to allow 2,000 housing units at Alameda Point due to concerns in Oakland about the impact of Alameda traffic in the Chinatown neighborhood. In 2009, the City of Alameda was required to find that development of 182 new units in the Northern Waterfront would have a significant unavoidable impact on regional air quality in accordance with Bay Area Air Quality Management District standards and thresholds, even though the Initial Vision Scenario is making the argument that the health of the planet is improved by those units being built in Alameda rather than the suburbs or exurbs of the Bay Area. The Initial Vision Scenario suggests a regional environmental document (Page 82) that might resolve some of these internal policy conflicts within the region. Clearly, if such a document is not provided or if these internal conflicts are not resolved in some other way, the City of Alameda's ability to accommodate new growth will be severely hampered.

Staff is inviting public, Planning Board and City Council review and comment on the draft responses to ABAG and MTC outlined above. Based upon the comments received, staff will revise the responses and transmit them to ABAG/MTC in May.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Participation in the SCS is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and comment on staff's preliminary responses to the Regional Sustainable Communities Strategy – Initial Vision Scenario.

Respectfully submitted,



Andrew Thomas
Planning Services Manager

Attachment:

1. Bay Area Plan Initial Vision Scenario, March 11, 2011-On file in the Community Development Department